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MARK RUTHERFORD'S ENGLAND

BY

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The undersigned hereby certify that they have read, and recommended to the School of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis on "Mark Rutherford's England", submitted by Gwen Dunlop, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTORY

In 1881 a small volume, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK RUTHERFORD, EDITED BY HIS FRIEND REUBEN SHAPCOTT, appeared in the book-stalls of London. Actually neither Mark Rutherford nor Reuben Shapcott existed except in the imagination of the author, William Hale White. The book created little stir and the anonymity of the author was successfully preserved. It was a quiet, sombre book with little to catch the attention of the casual reader. It was simply written, of slender plot and slight incident. The theme was Calvinistic Dissent and its effect upon Mark Rutherford's life. Gradually THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY grew in popularity and five other novels by Mark Rutherford appeared.

It is the purpose of this essay to discuss the England which Mark Rutherford depicts in his novels. It is not the England of Trollope or even of Dickens. Trollope's Church society of archdeacons, bishops, vicars and chaplains had little in common with Mark Rutherford's Chapel society of dissenting ministers and lay preachers. Dickens sometimes touches upon Dissent but his Stiggins and Chadbands are grotesques in comparison with Rutherford's Broad, Snale and Hexton. Rutherford knew these people. As his wife says in her Groombridge Diary, he never created a character, never wrote without having somebody before his mind's eye. His England is Nonconformist and the theme of his novels is provincial Dissent in the early and middle nineteenth century.

CHAPTER II THE SIX NOVELS

The AUTOBIOGRAPHY was published when its author was fifty years old. It, like his other novels, is characterized by a sincerity and depth of feeling, a sombre attitude towards life, relieved now and again by an ironic humour. Much of the book closely parallels Hale White's own life. As he says, "A good part of my life has appeared under disguise in one of my books."[1] Mark Rutherford, the son of Independent parents, begins his career as a dissenting minister but finds that he cannot believe whole-heartedly in the Calvinistic creed. His morbid self-questionings make life unhappy and miserable. He lacks the affection and understanding of a wife, the whole-hearted sympathy of a friend. Finally he gives up preaching but, as he knows no trade, he must take menial work which increases his unhappiness and his poverty. The book ends abruptly with no solution to his problems, but is continued in a second novel, published in 1885.

In MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Mark, with a friend, is trying to preach an undogmatic Christianity to the poor in London. As a result of life's harsh experiences, he has returned to a purer, wider Calvinism. He marries, and to augment his income works as a clerk in a warehouse under a harsh manager. His two or three hours at home each day are happy but one feels it is a precarious happiness. He dies suddenly and the book ends with an explanatory note by Reuben Shapcott.

1 EARLY LIFE OF MARK RUTHERFORD - Oxford University Press Edition Page 82

THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE (1887) falls into two distinct halves. The events of the first part take place between 1814 and 1817; the time of the second half is 1840. Part One is a sober, honest picture of the lower middle classes in London and Manchester at the time of the Bread Riots and Peterloo. The hero, Zachariah Coleman, is a Calvinist printer who, though a commonplace man of the people, is drawn into momentous affairs. He is a Radical and has a hand in the disastrous march of the misguided Blanketeers. These scenes of the brutal oppression of the Radicals by the government and ruling classes are relieved by the introduction of oddly-humorous characters such as Zachariah's wife, who attacks her house as if dirt were a physical enemy to be overcome. In the second half, all the characters are new with the exception of Zachariah who, though playing no direct part, provides a slender connecting link between the two parts of the book.

The scene is laid in a small East Midland town and the plot grows out of the strife between various members of the Dissenting Chapel. It brings out the social ideas of the times on religious, ethical and political questions.

MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING; AND OTHER PAPERS appeared in 1890. This is a short but penetrating character-study showing how the headstrong, self-centered Miriam is schooled and chastened by life. Her hot-headed, rebellious nature is subdued to a Stoical

reconciliation with her environment which leads her to say, "We are as we are, and we must make the best of it."

CATHARINE FURZE (1894) is Mark Rutherford's best novel, as far as form and structure are concerned. It is a unified story with a charming heroine set against an engaging satire on the "gentility" of the middle classes. Catharine is intelligent and frank and her conventional parents are in fear of what she may say or do next. Unfortunately for her, she falls under the spell of the Reverend Mr. Cardew and instead of settling down happily as the wife of Tom Catchpole, who adores her, she grieves over a love which can never be fulfilled. Finally she contracts pneumonia and dies in her early twenties.

Mark Rutherford's last novel, published in 1896, was CLARA HOPGOOD. The time of the story is 1844 and in it the author propounds, through his characters, his opinions on ethics and religion. His religion has now become very wide in scope and in one character, Baruch Cohen, it reaches a kind of Pantheism. Clara's sister, Madge, though brought up in the Church, bears a child in shame rather than marry the unworthy and mediocre man who has betrayed her. Political matters, such as the Corn Law agitation and the Chartist movement, enter the story and Mazzini appears in the last chapter as a refugee in London. He persuades Clara to join his cause and she dies in Italy, playing her part in that country's struggle for freedom.

CHAPTER III THE SETTING

A THE COACH ROAD

B THE TOWN

A THE COACH ROAD

In five of the novels the setting is a small town in the East Midlands. It is Bedford, thinly disguised, the town in which Hale White was born. He remembers seeing the famous 'Bedford Times' coach, 'racing along at twelve miles an hour'.

> 'Cowfold, half village, half town, lay about three miles to the west of the great North Road from London to York.....About two miles beyond it was a huge inn, with stables like cavalry barracks, where horses were changed. No coach went through Cowfold. When the inhabitants wished to go northwards or southwards they walked or drove to the junction, and waited on the little grassy triangle till a coach came by which had room for them. When they returned they were deposited at the same spot, and the passengers who were going through from London to York or Scotland, or who were coming up to London, always seemed to despise people who were taken up or who were left by the roadside there.
>
> There was, perhaps, some reason for this contempt. The North Road was at that time one of the finest roads in the world, broad, hard-metalled, and sound in the wettest weather. That which led to Cowfold was under the control of the parish, and in winter-time was very bad indeed. When you looked down it, it seemed as if it led nowhere, and indeed the inhabitants of the town were completely shut off from any close communication with the outer world.' 1

One source of communication was the mail-cart, which each night gathered up the mail from the post-office and disappeared into the darkness to return early in the morning with the in-coming mail.

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVI

> 'There was a vague belief that it went about fifteen miles and "caught" something somewhere; but nobody knew for certain, except the postmistress and the mail-cart driver, who were always remarkably reticent on the point. The driver was dressed in red, carried a long horn slung at the side of the cart, and was popularly believed also to have pistols with him. He never accosted anybody; sat on a solitary perch just big enough for him; swayed always backwards and forwards a little in a melancholy fashion as he rode; was never seen during the daytime, and was not, in any proper sense, a Cowfold person.' 1

When Miriam and her brother leave Cowfold for London they travel by stage.

> 'They continually met coaches going away to York, Newcastle, and even to Edinburgh, and the drivers mutely saluted by lifting their whips as they passed. Two drivers had thus met for forty years, and had never spoken a single word to one another. At last one died, and the other took his death so much to heart that he sickened and died too. The inns were nothing like the Cowfold inns. They were huge places, with stables like barracks, and outside each were relays of beautiful horses standing ready for the change.' 2

B THE TOWN

In MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE the setting is London, but in the other novels it is an East Midlands town. In MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING and THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE it is called Cowfold; in CATHARINE FURZE, Eastthorpe; and in CLARA HOPGOOD it appears as Fenmarket. In the AUTOBIOGRAPHY it is never mentioned by name. It is a country town, or as the author describes it, 'the

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVI
2 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING, Oxford University Press Edition of 1936,

country a little thickened and congested'.

The shopkeepers must be half-farmers too, for much of their conversation with their customers has to do with crops, drainage or the good points of a pig or horse.

> 'Cowfold had four streets, or, more correctly, only two, which crossed one another at right angles in the middle of the town, and formed there a kind of square or open place, in which, on Saturdays, a market was held. The "Angel" was in this square, and the shops grouped themselves round it. In the centre was a large pump with a great leaden spout that had a hole bored in it at the side. By stopping up the mouth of the spout with the hand it was possible through this hole to get a good drink, if a friend was willing to work the handle; and as the square was a public playground, the pump did good service, especially amongst the boys, all of whom preferred it greatly to a commonplace mug. On Sundays it was invariably chained up; for although it was no breach of the Sabbath to use the pump in the backyard, the line was drawn there, and it would have been voted by nine-tenths of Cowfold as decidedly immoral to get water from the one outside. The shops were a draper's, a grocer's, an ironmonger's, a butcher's, and a baker's. All these were regular shops, with shop-windows, and were within sight of one another. There were also other houses where things were sold; but these were mere dwelling-houses, and were at the poorer and more remote ends of Cowfold. None of the regular shops aforesaid were strictly what they professed to be. Each of them diverged towards "the general". The draper sold boots and shoes; the grocer sold drugs, stationery, horse and cow medicines, and sheep ointment; and the ironmonger dealt in crockery. Even the butcher was more than a butcher, for he was never to be seen at his chopping-block, and his wife did all the retail work. He himself was in the "jobbing" line, and was always jogging about in a cart, in the hind part of which, covered with a net, was a calf or a couple of pigs. Three out of the four streets ran out in cottages; but one was

> more aristocratic. This was Church Street, which contained the church and the parsonage. It also had in it four red brick houses, each surrounded with large gardens. In one lived a brewer who had a brewery in Cowfold, and owned a dozen beer-shops in the neighborhood; another was a seminary for young ladies; in the third lived the doctor; and in the fourth old Mr. and Mrs. Muston, who had no children, and had been there for fifty years.' 1

Eastthorpe, the town in which Catharine Furze lived, was an ancient market town built around the square. The Church had the prominent position in the town and near it, in red brick houses with white sashes, lived the doctor, the lawyer, the parson and 'two aged gentlewomen with some property'. In the centre of the marketplace was the Moot Hall, 'a quaint little building supported on oak pillars'. There were two Inns, the Bell which was Tory, and the Bull which was Whig.

> 'Such was Eastthorpe. For hundreds of years had the shadow of St. Mary's swept slowly over the roofs underneath it, and, of all those years, scarcely a line of its history survived, save what was written in the churchyard or in the church registers. The town had stood for the Parliament in the days of the Civil War, and there had been a skirmish in the place; but who fought in it, who were killed in it, and what the result was, nobody knew. Half a dozen old skulls of much earlier date and of great size were once found in a gravel pit two miles away, and were the subject of much talk, some taking them for Romans, some for Britons, some for Saxons, and some for Danes. As it was impossible to be sure if they were Christians,

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVI

> they could not be put in consecrated ground; they were therefore included in an auction of dead and live stock, and were bought by the doctor.' 1

Fenmarket lay ten miles north-east of Eastthorpe. It was similar in outline to Cowfold and Eastthorpe. The Hopgoods lived in the heart of the town.

> 'Mrs. Hopgood was the widow of the late manager in the Fenmarket branch of the bank of Rumbold, Martin, and Rumbold, and when her husband died she had, of course, to leave the Bank Buildings. As her income was somewhat straitened, she was obliged to take a small house, and she was now living next door to the "Crown and Sceptre", the principal inn in the town. There was then no fringe of villas to Fenmarket for retired quality; the private houses and shops were all mixed together, and Mrs. Hopgood's house was squeezed in between the ironmonger's and the inn. It was very much lower than either of its big neighbours, but it had a brass knocker and a bell, and distinctly asserted and maintained a kind of aristocratic superiority.' 2

Market day each Saturday brought many farmers into Cowfold and the little town bustled with activity.

> 'Sheep-pens were in the square full of sheep, and men were purchasing them and picking them out as they were sold; dogs were barking; the wandering dealer who pitched his earthenware van at the corner was ringing his plates together to prove them indestructible; old Madge Campion, who sold gooseberry-tarts and hot mutton-pies on her board under an awning supported by clothes-props, was surrounded by a shoal of children as happy as the sunshine; the man with the panorama was exhibiting, at one half-penny a head, the murder of Lord William Russell to a string of boys and girls who mounted the stool in turn to look through the glasses; and the cheapjack was expatiating on the merits

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter I
2 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter I

> of cutlery, pictures, fire-irons, and proving that his brass candlestick, honestly-worth-ten-shillings-but-obtainable-at-one-and-fourpence-because-he-really-could-not-cart-it-about-any-longer, answered the double purpose of a candlestick and burglar-alarm by reason of the tremendous click of the spring, which anybody might - if they liked - mistake for a pistol.' 1

Such is the general setting for the stories. In a later chapter we will have a look inside the houses.

1 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING, Page 132

CHAPTER IV SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLING

Two important influences on the inhabitants of these Midland towns were the schools and the Chapel or Church. In this chapter we will discuss the schools.

Mark Rutherford says of his school:

> 'During the week-day I went to the public school, where I learned little or nothing that did me much good. The discipline of the school was admirable, and the head-master was penetrated with a most lofty sense of duty, but the methods of teaching were very imperfect. In Latin we had to learn the Eton Latin Grammar till we knew every word of it by heart, but we did scarcely any retranslation from English into Latin. Much of our time was wasted on the merest trifles, such as learning to write, for example, like copperplate, and, still more extraordinary, in copying the letters of the alphabet as they are used in printing. But we had two half-holidays in the week, which seem to me now to have been the happiest part of my life.' 1

It was decided that Mark would enter the Ministry; so he was sent to a Dissenting College not far from his home town. There were about forty students at the college but Mark found none of them congenial.

> 'Not a single friendship formed then has remained with me. They were mostly young men of no education, who had been taken from the counter, and their spiritual life was not very deep. In many of them it did not even exist, and their whole attention was absorbed upon their chances of getting wealthy congregations or of making desirable matches..... I cannot call to mind a single conversation upon any but the most trivial topics, nor did our talk ever turn even upon our

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter I

> religion, so far as it was a thing affecting the soul, but only upon it as something subsidiary to chapels, "causes", deacons and the like. The emptiness of some of my colleagues, and their worldliness, too, were almost incredible.' 1

The President, who taught the various branches of theology, was assisted by three professors who taught Greek, Latin and mathematics.

> 'About the Greek and Latin and the secular part of the college discipline I will say nothing, except that it was generally inefficient. The theological and biblical teaching was a sham.' 2

No wonder the young student's doubts and questionings grew as he listened to the President expound upon the narrow, outworn dogmas of the Calvinist creed. The President was far too ignorant and complacent to pay any heed to biblical criticism from Germany or to sceptical English philosophies.

> 'It was a time in which the world outside was seething with the ferment which had been cast into it by Germany and by those in England whom Germany had influenced, but not a fragment of it dropped within our walls.' 3

At this time, the great public schools and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, were closed to Dissenters.

If financially possible, parents sent their daughters to a 'young ladies' seminary to complete their education. These were middle-class Anglican schools but they admitted the daughters of well-to-do Nonconformists. Catharine Furze was sent to such a school -

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter II
2 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter II
3 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter II

'The Limes', in Abchurch, kept by the Misses Ponsonby.

These ladies were particularly successful with young girls whose early training had been neglected. They limited the enrollment to thirty.

> 'Both had the same "views" on all matters religious and social, and both of them confessed that on many points, their "views" were "strict" - whatever that singular phrase may have meant. Nevertheless, they displayed remarkable tact in reconciling parents with the defects and peculiarities of their children. There were always girls in the school of varying degrees of intelligence, from absolute stupidity to brilliancy, but the report at the end of the term was so fashioned that the father and mother of the idiot were not offended, and the idocy was so handled that it appeared to have some advantages.'
>
> The studies of the pupils were superintended by the Misses Ponsonby and sundry teachers, all female, except the drawing-master and the music-master. The course embraced the usual branches of a superior English education, French, Italian, deportment, and the use of the globes, but, as the Misses Ponsonby truly stated in their prospectus, their sole aim was not the inculcation of knowledge, but such instruction as would enable the young ladies committed to their charge to move with ease in the best society, and, above everything, the impression of correct principles in morality and religion.'
>
> At half-past eight there were prayers. The girls filed into the drawing-room, sat round in a ring, of which the Misses Ponsonby formed a part, but with a break of about two feet right and left, the servants sitting outside near the door; a chapter was read, a prayer also read; and then, after a suitable pause, the servants rose from their knees, the pupils rose next, and the Misses Ponsonby last; the time which each division, servants, pupils and Ponsonbys remained kneeling being graduated exactly in proportion to rank.' 1

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter VI

Even the correct way to walk to church was taught to the girls and two-by-two was frowned upon.

> 'The pupils therefore walked irregularly, the irregularity being prescribed. The entering the church; the leaving the pews; the loitering and salutations in the church yard; the slow, superior saunter homewards were all the result of lecture, study, and even of practice on week-days.' 1

Catharine had rather a difficult time of it at 'The Limes'. In arithmetic and geometry she was far ahead of the other girls, but she was deficient in history, languages, dancing and deportment.

> 'Her history was deplorable, and her first task, therefore, was what were called dates. A table had been prepared of the kings and queens of England - when they came to the throne, and when they died; and another table gave the years of all the battles. A third table gave the relationship of the kings and queens to each other, and the reasons for succession. All this had to be learned by heart. In languages, also, Catharine was singularly defective. Her French was intolerable and most inaccurate, and of Italian she knew nothing. Her dancing and deportment were so"provincial" as Miss Adela Ponsonby happily put it, that it was thought better that the dancing and deportment teacher should give her a few private lessons before putting her in a class, and she was consequently instructed alone in the rudiments of the art of entering and leaving a room with propriety, of sitting with propriety on a sofa when conversing, of reading a book in a drawing-room, of acknowledging an introduction, of sitting down to a meal and rising there-from, and in the use of the pocket handkerchief. She had particularly shocked the Misses Ponsonby on this latter point, as she was in the habit of blowing her nose energetically, "snorting", as one of the young ladies said collcquially, but with truth, and the deportment mistress had some difficulty in reducing her to the whisper which was all that was permitted in the Ponsonby establishment, even in cases of severe cold.' 2

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter VI
2 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter VII

Young Priscilla Broad, like her brother and sister, was taught at home by Mrs. Broad, who would not let her children attend the Cowfold school because of the "mixture", as she called it. Priscilla's accomplishments included 'Scripture and English history, arithmetic, geography, the use of the globes, and dates.'.

Madge and Clara Hopgood had a very unorthodox education and hence were considered by Fenmarket society to be 'odd'. They attended the town's day-school and then Clara went to Germany to study while Madge attended an Anglican girls' school in Brighton. Her room-mate, Selina Fish, found, to her horror, that although Madge's parents were Anglican, Madge had never been christened. To Selina, to be nothing was even worse than to be a confessed Roman Catholic, or even a Jewess. Of course Selina's mother complained to the Misses Pratt about this 'heathen' who was her daughter's roommate and they dismissed Madge.

> 'It was one of the rules of the school that no tradesmen's daughters should be admitted, but it was very difficult to draw the line, and when drawn, the Misses Pratt were obliged to admit it was rather ridiculous. There was much debate over an application by an auctioneer. He was clearly not a tradesman, but he sold chairs, tables and pigs, and, as Miss Hannah said, used vulgar language in recommending them. However, his wife had money; they lived in a pleasant house in Lewes, and the line went outside him. But when a druggist, with a shop in Bond Street, proposed his daughter, Miss Hannah took a firm stand.' 1

1 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter II

So both the druggist's daughter and Madge were found unsuitable. To Madge it was a great joke and she went off to join Clara in Weimar.

Upon their return to Fenmarket they were left out of social affairs because their strange education had made them 'peculiar'.

> 'No Fenmarket maiden, other than the Hopgoods, was supposed to have any connection whatever . or to have any capacity for any connection with anything outside the world in which "young ladies" dwelt, and if a Fenmarket girl read a book, a rare occurrence, for there were no circulating libraries there in those days, she never permitted herself to say anything more than that it was "nice", or it was "not nice", or she "liked it" or did "not like it"; and if she had ventured to say more, Fenmarket would have thought her odd, not to say a little improper. The Hopgood young women were almost entirely isolated, for the tradesfolk felt themselves uncomfortable and inferior in every way in their presence, and they were ineligible for rectory and brewery society, not only because their father was merely a manager, but because of their strange ways. Mrs. Tubbs, the brewer's wife, thought they were due to Germany. From what she knew of Germany she considered it almost injudicious, and even morally wrong, to send girls there. She once made the acquaintance of a German lady at an hotel at Tunbridge Wells, and was quite shocked. She could see plainly that the standard of female delicacy must be much lower in that country than in England.
>
> 'Occasionally the Misses Hopgood were encountered, and they confounded Fenmarket sorely. On one memorable occasion there was a party at the Rectory; it was the annual party into which were swept all the unclassifiable odds-and-ends which could not be put into the two gatherings which included the aristocracy and the democracy of the place. Miss Clara Hopgood amazed everybody by "beginning talk", by asking Mrs. Greatorex, her hostess, who had been away to Sidmouth for a holiday, whether she had been to the place where Coleridge was born, and when the parson's wife said she

had not, and that she could not be expected to make a pilgrimage to the birthplace of an infidel, Miss Hopgood expressed her surprise, and declared she would walk twenty miles any day to see Ottery St. Mary. Still worse, when somebody observed that an Anti-Corn Law lecturer was coming to Fenmarket, and the parson's daughter cried "How horrid!" Miss Hopgood talked again, and actually told the parson that, so far as she had read upon the subject - fancy her reading about the Corn Laws! - the argument was all one way, and that after Colonel Thompson nothing new could really be urged.' 1

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1 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter II

CHAPTER V DISSENT CHURCH AND CHAPEL

Calvinistic Dissent flourished in England from the days of the Commonwealth. Many separate branches grew up during the years, such as Baptists, Methodists and Congregationalists, but the group which remained the purest in descent were the Independents. Dissent flourished in the market towns and usually included the well-to-do tradesmen and their employees. But by 1840 much of the robust enthusiasms and fiery convictions of the earlier Calvinists had been lost and by 1865, as far as ultimate convictions were concerned, it was difficult to distinguish between the Congregationalist and his Anglican neighbor. Mark Rutherford lived during the transition period when the old Nonconformity was still a tradition to be adhered to, although the first stirrings of doubt were becoming vocal. In 1871 another barrier between Dissenters and Anglicans was removed with the opening of Oxford and Cambridge Universities to Dissenters.

The novels often mention the distinctions between Church and Chapel. For instance, here is what Mark Rutherford writes of his first congregation in Water Lane.

> 'It (Water Lane) had a population of about seven or eight thousand, and was a sort of condensation of the agricultural country round. There was one main street, consisting principally of very decent, respectable shops. Generally speaking, there were two shops of each trade; one which was patronized by the Church and Tories, and another by the Dissenters and Whigs.' 1

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter III

Sometimes this distinction was modified, as for instance, in the town of D-------, where Mark Rutherford for a short time had charge of the Unitarian chapel. There, as in other towns, the Church considered the Unitarians as non-Christian, and Mark Rutherford wondered how Mr. Lane, the Unitarian shopkeeper, retained his business. But he had established a reputation for honesty and his customers, 'notwithstanding the denunciations of the parson, preferred tea with some taste in it from a Unitarian to the insipid wood-flavoured stuff which was sold by the grocer who believed in the Trinity'.

But to return to Water Lane:

> 'The inhabitants were divided into two distinct camps - of the Church and Tory camp the other camp knew nothing. On the other hand, the knowledge which each member of the Dissenting camp had of every other member was most intimate. The Dissenters were further split up into two or three different sects, but the main sect was that of the Independents.' 1

The Hopgoods were Anglicans, not Dissenters. Mr. Hopgood did not go to church but his wife was a believer, 'neither High Church nor Low Church, but inclined towards a kind of quietism not uncommon in the Church of England, even during its bad time, a reaction against the formalism which generally prevailed'. 2 She was a pious woman but she seldom went to church. 'The church to be sure was horribly dead, but she did not give that as a reason.' 3

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter III
2 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter I
3 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter I

Church society in Fenmarket, as in Cowfold, was made up of the parish clergyman, the squire, the lawyer, the wine merchant, the doctor, certain retired persons of means and the schoolmaster. Although they had business dealings with Church society, socially the Dissenters were ignored. However, the Dissenters took comfort from their belief that, although Church members enjoyed a temporary superiority on earth, the possibility of their admission into the Kingdom of Heaven was exceedingly remote.

Occasionally well-to-do Dissenters, wishing to improve their social position, joined the Church. This was the case with the Furzes and with Clem Butts. The latter was a young man who set up a school for boys. Of course he joined the Church as it would have ruined his school had he remained a Dissenter. Actually he was a shallow man with no religious conviction and the change meant nothing to him spiritually. As Mark Rutherford said, 'I once rebuked him for his hypocrisy, and his defence was that religious disputes were indifferent to him, and that at any rate a man associates with gentlemen if he is a Churchman. Cultivation and manners he thought to be of more importance than Calvinism.' 1

In Cowfold there was an Anglican Church and three Chapels. The Church was supported by the brewer, the doctor, old Mr. and Mrs. Muston who were a retired couple with means, and the young ladies from the Seminary. The rest of Cowfold were Dissenters or "went nowhere", although the last class was very small.

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter III

The most important of the three chapels was the orthodox, Independent one. It was situated on Tanner's Lane and held about seven hundred and fifty persons. It was really the centre of Dissent for the whole district, and on Sundays many families, bringing their dinners with them, came from the surrounding villages. Its minister was the Reverend John Broad, but more will be said of him later.

The second chapel was the Wesleyan. It was of little importance and 'had no roots in the town. The Church disliked it because it was Dissenting, and the Dissenters disliked it because it was half-Church, and, above all, Tory'. 1

The third chapel was 'strict Baptist, ultra-Calvinistic, Antinomian according to the other sects, dark, down an alley, mean, surrounded by a small long-grassed graveyard, and named ZOAR in large letters over the long window in front'. 2 Both minister and congregation were poor and would not have remained in existence except for a small endowment attached to ZOAR.

> 'The Independent minister, the Wesleyan minister, and, of course, the rector had nothing to do with the minister of ZOAR. This was not because of any heresy or difference of doctrine, but because he was a poor man and poor persons sat under him. Nevertheless he was not in any way a characteristic Calvinist. The Calvinistic creed was stuck in him as in a lump of fat, and had no organising influence upon him whatever. He had no weight in Cowfold, took part in none of its affairs, and his ministrations were confined to about fifty sullen, half stupid, wholly

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVI
2 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVI

> ignorant people who found in the ZOAR services something sleepier and requiring less mental exertion than they needed elsewhere; although it must be said that the demands made upon the intellect in none of the places of worship were very extensive.' 1

When the Furzes joined the Church in Eastthorpe they were, of course, asked for a donation for the fund which had been started to 'restore the Church'. The roof needed to be replaced and stained glass restored to many of the windows. One tradition was that the Church windows had been mutilated when Oliver Cromwell used it as a stable. But Mark Rutherford doubts this theory. 'The quantity of stable accommodation he must have required throughout the country, to judge from vergers and guide-books, must have been much larger than his armies would have needed, if they had been entirely composed of cavalry; and the evidence is not strong that his horses were so ubiquitous.' 2 Another tradition maintained that part of the stained glass had been removed, years ago, and sold. 'Anyhow there was stained glass in the Honourable Mr. Eaton's mansion wonderfully like that at Eastthorpe.' 3

> 'Then there was the warming, and this was a great difficulty, because no natural exit for the pipe could be found. At last it was settled to have three stoves, one at the west end of the nave, and one in each transept. With regard to the one in the nave there was no help for it but to bore a hole through the wall. The builder undertook "to give the pipe outside a touch of the Gothic, so that it wouldn't look

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVI
2 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter V
3 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter V

> bad", and as for the other stoves, there were two windows just handy. By cutting out the head of Matthew in one, and that of Mark in another, the thing was done, and, as Mrs. Colston observed, "the general confused effect remained the same".' 1

In THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY there is a detailed description of the Chapel and the order of service which Mark Rutherford remembered so well from boyhood. The Chapel had been built in the reign of Charles II. It was large and contained the old-fashioned high pews. The ceiling was high and was supported, together with the galleries, by tall wooden pillars. In the front was the 'communion pew' usually occupied by the poor members of the congregation who could not afford to rent private pews. The singers sat in the 'singing pew' and they were accompanied, not by an organ, but by four musicians who played a clarionet, flute or bassoon, violin, and violoncello respectively. A tenor in the choir usually 'set the tune'.

There were three services every Sunday, each one consisting of a hymn, a reading from the Bible, then another hymn followed by a prayer. Then came the sermon, a third hymn, and a short closing prayer. 'The reading of the Bible was unaccompanied with any observations or explanations, and I do not remember that I ever once heard a mistranslation corrected.' 2 The long prayer was 'a horrible hypocrisy', 'a kind of dialogue with God'. The sermon was a dreary performance which varied little, year in and year out.

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter V
2 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter I

> 'The minister inveriably began with the fall of man; propounded the scheme of redemption, and ended by depicting in the morning the blessedness of the saints, and in the evening the doom of the lost. There was a tradition that in the morning there should be "experience", that is to say, comfort for the elect, and that in the evening should be appropriated to their less fortunate brethren.' 1

One can imagine how difficult it must have been for children to sit through three such services each Sunday. Mark Rutherford describes it as 'a season of unmixed gloom'. To keep awake was agony but he dared not commit the sin of sleeping 'under the Gospel'.

> 'The chapel was lighted in winter by immense chandeliers with tiers of candles all round. These required perpetual snuffing, and I can see the old man going round the chandeliers in the middle of the service with a mighty pair of snuffers which opened and shut with a loud click. How I envied him because he had a semi-secular occupation which prevented that terrible drowsiness! How I envied the pew-opener, who was allowed to stand at the vestry door, and could slip into the vestry every now and then, or even into the burial-ground if he heard irreverent boys playing there! The atmosphere of the chapel on hot nights was most foul, and this added to my discomfort. Oftentimes in winter, when no doors or windows were open, I have seen the glass panes streaming with wet inside, and women carried out fainting.' 2

When Mark was fourteen he was 'converted'.

> 'Conversion, amongst the Independents and other Puritan sects, is supposed to be a kind of miracle wrought in the heart by the influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the man becomes something altogether different to what he was previously.' 3

In earlier days, when Calvinism was a living faith, conversion, such as that of Paul in the Bible, was occasionally a reality, but

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter I.
2 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter I
3 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter I

to Mark Rutherford it was unmeaning. Nevertheless he declared himself 'convinced of sin' and 'convinced of forgiveness', with the result that, from then on, he attended an extra meeting on Sunday and one or two prayer-meetings on week-nights.

CHAPTER VI MINISTERS AND RECTORS

The ministers in the novels are pictured with relentless and unerring skill. They never become caricatures; indeed it is their very plausibility which makes them so unpleasantly real.

The Reverend John Broad was minister of Tanner's Lane Chapel. He was a bloated, gormandizing creature with a 'heavy ox-face and large mouth', ignorant and hypocritical. He thought of himself as moderate in his 'views', not rigid about Baptism nor direct in his attacks upon evil. 'If he thought a brother had done wrong, he contented himself with praying in private for him.' Doubt about himself or his actions never entered his mind.

> 'Mr. Broad loved his wife decently, brought up his children decently, and not the slightest breath of scandal ever tarnished his well-polished reputation. On some points he was most particular, and no young woman who came to him with her experience before she was admitted into the church was ever seen by him alone. Always was a deacon present, and all Cowfold admitted that the minister was most discreet. Another recommendation, too, was that he was temperate in his drink. He was not so in his meat. Supper was his great meal, and he would then consume beef, ham, or sausages, hot potatoes, mixed pickles, fruit pies, bread, cheese, and celery in quantities which were remarkable even in those days; but he never drank anything but beer - a pint at dinner and a pint at supper.' 1

On Monday afternoons it was his invariable custom to have tea with Mrs. Broad, when they would spend an hour and a half discussing members of the congregation, he taking the men, and Mrs.

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVII

Broad the women. Earlier in the day he slept after his exertions on Sunday for, as he explained it, he always felt "Mondayish". This impressed young missionary students who realized 'how great were the weight and fatigue of the pastoral office'.

Mr. Broad conceived a violent dislike for Brother Allen and his son, George. He found out that they sometimes visited Zachariah Coleman and his daughter in London. Coleman, who was a broad-minded Calvinistic Radical, had not brought up his daughter in any particular faith. At a weekly church-meeting, Mr. Broad delivered a bitter, slanderous attack against the Allens. Mr. George, he said, had been seen ALONE with an infidel female! 'He could not measure the extent of that intercourse; the Searcher of hearts alone could do that, save the parties concerned; but, of course, as she was an unbeliever, they must fear the worst.' Zachariah, he attacked also as an infidel.

> 'He had evidence that in this miserable household there was a portrait of that dreadful blasphemer Voltaire, who on his deathbed cried out in vain for that salvation which he had so impiously refused, and amidst shrieks of despair, which chilled with terror those who stood by him, was carried off by the Enemy of Souls to the lake that burneth with brimstone, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. This was a famous paragraph in one of Mr. Broad's sermons preached on great occasions, and particularly when he supplied a metropolitan pulpit. The story had been contradicted twice in the county paper by a Frenchman, ---- and a copy of the contradiction had been sent to Mr. Broad. He was content with observing that its author was a Frenchman, and therefore probably an atheist,

> "with no consciousness of moral obligation". Voltaire's diabolic disappearance continued, therefore, to be one of Mr. Broad's most striking effects.' 1

Then there was the minister of a Methodist chapel in Manchester, whom Zachariah Coleman had heard on one occasion.

> 'The preacher spoke a broad Lancashire dialect, and was very dramatic. He pictured God's efforts to save a soul. Under the pulpit ledge was the imaginary bottomless pit of this world - not of the next. He leaned over and pretended to be drawing the soul up with a cord. "He comes, he comes!" he cried; "God be praised he is safe!" and he landed him on the Bible. The congregation gave a great groan of relief. "There he is on the Rock of Ages! No, no, he slips; the Devil has him!" The Preacher tried to rescue him. "He is gone - gone!" and he bent over the pulpit in agony. The people almost shrieked. "Gone - gone!" he said again with most moving pathos, and was still for a moment.' 2

Here is another account of a minister and his sermon. It is taken, not from one of the six novels, but from Hale White's personal journal.

> 'This morning as I walked by the sea, a man was preaching on the sands to about a dozen people. ----He told us that we were lying under the wrath of God, that we might die at any moment, and that if we did not believe in the Lord Jesus we should be damned, everlastingly. "Believe in the Lord," he shouted. ---"The devil will have you if you don't turn to the Lord, and you will go down to the bottomless, brimstone pit, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth for ever and ever."
>
> 'Sunny clouds lay in the blue above him, and at his feet summer waves were breaking peacefully on the shore, the sound of their soft, musical plash filling up his pauses and commenting on his texts.' 3

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XXVII
2 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter IX
3 MORE PAGES FROM A JOURNAL, Oxford University Press Edition of 1910. Page 158

There are a few ministers in the novels whom Mark Rutherford describes with sympathy and enthusiasm. The most important is the Reverend Thomas Bradshaw of Pike Street Meeting-house in London. He was well-educated, very sincere, very strict and fearless. He could be intensely dramatic and made the shadowy Bible characters 'living human beings, with the reddest of blood visible under their skin'. He was a Republican through and through and, when Zachariah Coleman was in danger of being seized by police as a radical, it was Mr. Bradshaw who warned him and made possible his escape to Manchester.

One of the kindliest descriptions is of an Anglican vicar, Mr. Armstrong. His church was in the village of Marston-Cocking, near Cowfold. After the death of his wife he had come to the tiny parish meaning to stay only a short time, but he had been there thirty-five years. His hobby was astronomy and his enthusiasm infected Miriam and Didymus Farrow.

> 'He was completely out of the world, troubled himself with no church controversies, and preached little short sermons telling his congregation not to tell lies nor be unkind to one another. Every now and then he introduced into his discourses his one favorite subject, astronomy, and by degrees the labourers in Marston-Cocking knew more about the sky and its daily and nightly changes than many a highly educated person in the city.' 1

He made his own instruments and with the help of Miriam and Didymus built an orrery. He used the top of the church-tower for an observatory.

1 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING Page 135

> 'Mrs. Bullen, the wife of the one farmer in the parish, a lady who wrote the finest of Italian pointed hands, who had been in a Brighton boarding-school for ten years, and had been through "Keith on the Use of the Globes" was much scandalised at this "appropriation of the sacred edifice to secular purposes", as she called it, but she met with no encouragement. The poor people somehow connected heaven with the stars, and Mr. Armstrong never undeceived them, so that they saw nothing improper in the big telescope under the weathercock.' 1

When Catharine Furze goes to boarding-school in Abchurch, she meets and falls in love with Mr. Cardew, the rector of the village church. Although he is no hypocrite, he is a strange, inconsistent person, sincere, but completely self-centred and self-absorbed. He is cold and unjust to his wife whom he considers dull because she expresses her loving nature in deeds, not words. Or, as Dr. Turnbull puts it, 'while he is luxuriating amongst the cowslips, in what he calls thinking, she is teaching the sick people patience and nursing them'.

In his peculiar way, he falls in love with Catharine but their mutual feelings are never put into words. Perhaps he comes close to expressing his feelings when he tells her, "Oh, Miss Furze, to think your existence and mine are part of the Divine eternal plan, and that without us it would be wrecked."

Catharine's hopeless love for him hastens her death. Mark Rutherford remarks that had she been born later in the century the new education would have provided her with new interests such as a

1 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING, Page 136

study of literature, history, political economy, or even chemistry.

> 'Shakespeare or Wordsworth might have been of some use to her, but to Shakespeare she was not led, although there was a brown, dusty, one-volume edition at the Terrace; and of Wordsworth nobody whom she knew in Eastthorpe had so much as heard.' 1

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1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter X

CHAPTER VII DEACONS

The most important members of a Dissenting congregation were the deacons. Usually the people were content to let them manage church affairs, engage or dismiss the minister, and even control the minister's conduct. Ministers usually accepted this interference because, if they should be dismissed, it was difficult to find another position. Often, too, it was a matter of expense. Salaries were low and ministers could not afford to move around. Mark Rutherford's salary in Water Lane was about one hundred and twenty pounds a year; fifty pounds from a small endowment on the chapel, and about seventy pounds from pew-rents. Mr. Broad's salary was higher because his congregation was a large, well-to-do one.

Mr. Broad had a difficult time trying to keep peace between two of his deacons; Mr. Bushel, who was a farmer and a Protectionist, and Mr. Allen who kept a shop and believed in Free Trade. For various reasons he finally lost Mr. Allen from his congregation. Before making the violent attack upon Mr. Allen which precipitated the latter's withdrawal from the chapel, Mr. Broad called a meeting at his home of his three deacons. Mr. Allen had previously resigned as a deacon and the three members now were Brother Bushel, Brother Wainwright, the cart-builder and blacksmith, and Brother Scotton, the auctioneer.

The discussion centered on Brother Allen's unbecoming conduct.

Brother Bushel declared that Mr. Allen should be put out of chapel at once.

> 'Mr. Bushel was short-necked, and shook his head always while he was talking, apparently in order to disengage his meaning, which consequently issued in broken fragments.' 1

He closed his argument by quoting from his favourite hymn, "Sickly sheep infects the flock and pisons all the rest".

Brother Wainwright was a little man, 'with a little round head covered with straggling hair'. He added nothing to the discussion because he would not disagree with Brother Bushel, with whom he had an account. He sat with his hat between his knees and gazed into it as if seeking inspiration.

> 'He again looked in his hat, shut his mouth fast; again scratched his head; again shook it a little, and with another jerk, as if announcing a conclusion at which he had arrived with great certainty, but after a severe mental effort, he said - "Oi go with Brother Bushel, Oi do."' 2

Brother Scotton then gave his opinion. He was a tall, thin man who, like Mr. Broad, steered a middle course. He was an auctioneer and land surveyor; he prepared leases and drew up inventories and agreements.

> 'There was always, therefore, a legal flavour about him, and he prided himself on his distent professional relationship to full-blown attorneyhood. ---- He had an office - no shop - with a wire blind in the window with the words, "Scotton, Land Agent, Auctioneer, and Appraiser", painted on it.' 3

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XXVI
2 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XXVI
3 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XXVI

He deliberated for some time before giving his verdict, which was, that Mr. Allen should be called to a church-meeting and allowed to speak in his own defence.

This course of action was finally agreed upon and, after refusing Mr. Broad's invitation to take some refreshments, the deacons left the meeting.

> 'Brother Bushel did not believe in Mr. Broad's refreshments, save those which were spiritual, and declined them with some abruptness, preferring much a glass of hot brown brandy and water at the inn where his horse was. Brother Wainwright would have taken anything, but was bound to follow Brother Bushel, who was about to give him a lift homewards; and Brother Scotton was a tee-totaller, one of the first who was converted in Cowfold, and just a trifle suspected at Tanner's Lane, and by Bushel in particular, on that account. Water-drinking was not a heresy to which any definite objection could be raised; but Tanner's Lane always felt that if once a man differed so far from his fellows as not to drink beer and spirits, there was no knowing where the division might end.' 1

The description of the deacons in Mark Rutherford's chapel in Water Lane is much more caustic. Mr. Snale is the most odious figure in the novels. He and young Rutherford were bitter enemies. There were four deacons although Mark Rutherford describes only three.

The first was Mr. Catfield, an old farmer from a near-by village. He and his family brought their dinner each Sunday so that they could stay for the morning and afternoon meetings. The evening one they were forced to miss as they went to bed, in winter-time

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XXVI

at least, at eight o'clock. Mr. Catfield gave out the hymns. He was an honest, kind, ignorant man who read only the Bible and one newspaper, Bell's Weekly Messenger.

> 'Even about the Bible he knew little or nothing beyond a few favourite chapters; and I am bound to say that, so far as my experience goes, the character so frequently drawn in romances of intense Bible students in Dissenting congregations is very rare. At the same time Mr. Catfield believed himself to be very orthodox, and in his way was very pious. I could never call him a hypocrite.' 1

The second deacon, Mr. Weeley, was an undertaker and carpenter.

> 'He was a thin, tall man, with a tenor voice, and he set the tunes. He was entirely without energy of any kind, and always seemed oppressed by a world which was too much for him. --- He was a mere shadow, a man of whom nothing could be said either good or evil.' 2

Mr. Snale, the third deacon, was a slim, small man of about thirty-five. He was a draper and did a good business. Even Church people patronized him because he was so "genteel". He was extremely neat and instead of the beards common in that day, had only a pair of small curly whiskers.

> 'He had a little voice, too, rather squeaky, and the marked peculiarity that he hardly ever said anything, no matter how disagreeable it might be, without stretching, as if in a smile, his thin little lips. --- Mr. Snale was married, had children, and was strictly proper. But his way of talking to women and about them was more odious than the way of a debauchee.

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter III

2 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter III

> 'He invariably called them "the ladies", or more exactly, "the leedies"; and he hardly ever spoke to a "leedy" without a smirk and some faint attempt at a joke.' 1

Mr. Snale and Mark Rutherford disliked each other at sight and Mr. Snale determined to get rid of the young minister, not by direct methods, but by such contemptible, sly ways as writing unsigned letters to the newspapers. The first of these letters appeared after Rutherford had spoken at a meeting in favor of a better water supply for the town. Mr. Snale and other townsmen had opposed the scheme on the grounds of increased taxes. The following Saturday the letter appeared in the paper signed by 'A Christian Tradesman'. The writer objected to a minister interfering in politics or other worldly matters.

> 'Like the widows in affliction of old, he should keep himself pure and unspotted from the world. How can many of us accept the glorious gospel on the Sabbath from a man who will incur spots during the week by arguing about cesspools like any other man? Sir, I will say nothing, moreover, about a minister of the gospel assisting to bind burdens - that is to say, rates and taxation - upon the shoulders of men grievous to be borne. Surely, sir, a minister of the Lamb of God, who was shed for the remission of sins, should be AGAINST burdens.' 2

Mark Rutherford recognized the writer at once, chiefly by the muddled passages from scriptures but, as he had no definite proof, said nothing. Some months later Snale wrote to the paper again, this time to criticize the minister's sermons which were now, he said, 'tainted' with 'human philosophy'. He is speaking to the ~~editor~~:

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter III
2 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter IV

editor:

> 'Sir, I should like to know what the dear departed who endowed that chapel, and are asleep in the Lord in that burying-ground, would say if they were to rise from their graves and sit in those pews again and hear what I heard - a sermon which might have been a week-day lecture.' 1

Mark Rutherford went immediately to the shop and accused Snale of writing the letters. The quarrel was at last out in the open, but before they finished, Snale recognized a carriage in front of his door and rushed out to bow obsequiously to one of his best customers. Mark Rutherford says, "I passed him in going out, but the oily film of subserviency on his face was not broken for an instant."

Mr. Snale appeared, too, in the description of the first Dorcas meeting held after Mark Rutherford came to Water Lane. It was customary to hold one Dorcas meeting a month at which the wives and daughters of the chapel drank tea and made clothes for the poor. The husband of the woman at whose home the meeting was held, helped to serve tea, and the minister was invited to read aloud to the workers.

> 'It was my lot to be Mr. Snale's guest two or three times when Mrs. Snale was the Dorcas hostess. We met in the drawing-room, which was over the shop, and looked out into the town market-place. There was a round table in the middle of the room, at which Mrs. Snale sat and made the tea. Abundance of hot buttered toast and muffins were provided, which Mr. Snale and a maid handed round to the party. Four pictures

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter VI

> 'decorated the walls. One hung over the mantelpiece. It was a portrait in oils of Mr. Snale, and opposite to it, on the other side, was a portrait of Mrs. Snale. Both were daubs, but curiously faithful in depicting what was most offensive in the character of both the originals, Mr. Snale's simper being preserved; together with the peculiarly hard, heavy sensuality of the eye in Mrs. Snale, who was large and full-faced, correct like Mr. Snale, a member of the church, a woman whom I never saw moved to any generosity, and cruel, not with the ferocity of the tiger, but with the dull insensibility of a cart-wheel, which will roll over a man's neck as easily as over a flint. The third picture represented the descent of the Holy Ghost; a number of persons sitting in a chamber, and each one with the flame of a candle on his head. The fourth represented the last day. The Son of God was in a chair surrounded by clouds, and beside Him was a flying figure blowing a long mail-coach horn. The dead were coming up out of their graves; some were half out of the earth, others three-parts out - the whole of the bottom part of the picture being filled with bodies emerging from the ground, a few looking happy, but most of them very wretched; all of them being naked.' 1

The reading matter at such meetings was narrow in scope. It could be secular, but had to have a religious flavor. Usually Mr. Snale chose the denominational journal. The ladies carried on their conversation in subdued whispers during the reading. At half-past eight the meeting was closed with a hymn and a prayer. Supper was not served.

Mark Rutherford chose to read "The Vicar of Wakefield", but after a chapter or so Mr. Snale advised him to choose some other book. "Because, you know, Mr. Rutherford," he said with his smirk,

1 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Chapter III

"the company is mixed; there are young leedies present, and perhaps, Mr. Rutherford, a book with a more requisite tone might be more suitable on such an occasion." Mark Rutherford hardly understood what was meant but for the next meeting he unwisely chose a selection from George Fox's Journal. This proved unsatisfactory, too, for, as Mr. Snale said, "Although Mr. Fox might be a very good man, and was a converted character, yet he did not, you know, Mr. Rutherford, belong to us." Hence the poor minister was forced to read from the Journal 'and other slip-slop of this kind'. He says, "I could not endure it, and was frequently unwell on Dorcas evenings."

CHAPTER VIII MIDDLE CLASS WEEK-DAYS AND SUNDAYS

We have had glimpses into the daily lives of these members of the Dissenting congregations, have seen them at Dorcas meetings, at chapel services, and in school. But what were their daily lives?

Here is some idea of the daily life of a shopkeeper in Cowfold. One of the apprentices opened the shop at seven in the morning, then the owner went down about seven-thirty for half an hour. At eight o'clock he returned for family worship and breakfast. Family worship consisted of a chapter from the Bible and an extempore prayer by the man of the house. 'If the master happened to be absent, it was not considered proper that the mistress should pray extempore, and she used a book of "Family Devotions".' After breakfast the man returned to his shop where business was conducted in a leisurely fashion. Once or twice a week he travelled about the country in his gig, usually to collect some debts. Shops were often closed between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, for that was the dinner hour. Tea at four was the most enjoyable meal of the day.

> 'If any spark of wit slept in any Cowfoldian male or female, it appeared then. No invitations to dinner were ever heard of; but tea was the opportunity for hospitality, especially among women. The minister, when he visited, invariably came to tea.' 1

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVI

After tea, the master went back to his shop and the shutters were put up at eight. Supper at nine was another sociable meal but of a lower order.

> 'Everybody had whisky, gin, or brandy afterwards, and every male person who was of age smoked. There was, as a rule, no excess, but the remarks were apt to be disconnected and woolly; and the wife, who never had grog for herself, but always sipped her husband's, went to sleep.' 1

Eleven o'clock saw all Cowfold in bed.

Unlike the upper classes, Dissenters had no organized amusements such as dancing, card-playing, or hunting. Dancing and card-playing, of course, were frowned upon. Mark Rutherford says of dancing:

> 'In 1840 it may safely be said that there were not twenty Independent families in Great Britain in which it would have been tolerated, and, moreover, none but the rich learned to dance. No dancing-master ever came into Cowfold; there was no music-master there; no concert was ever given; and Cowfold, in fact, never "saw nor heard anything", to use a modern phrase, save a travelling menagerie with a brass band.' 2

But often, in the summer, the members of the congregation indulged in a picnic. After an early dinner they drove out in gigs and four-wheel chaises to Shott Woods. There they built a fire and made tea with which they served quantities of bread, jam, cakes, ham and other good things.

> 'The picnics were generally on a Monday, as a kind of compliment to Mr. Broad, who was supposed to need rest and change on Monday, and who was also supposed not to be able to spare the time on any other day.' 3

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVI
2 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVIII
3 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVIII

Everyone sat on the grass but chairs were always brought for Mr. and Mrs. Broad. After tea was over and grace said, the younger members wandered off on walks while the older ones repacked the hampers. Then, after an hour or so, everyone was ready for the return journey.

The foregoing description is, of course, of people belonging to the middle class. Class distinctions in England, in the nineteenth century, were very rigid, and Mark Rutherford's novels show only the middle and lower classes.

The few who might be said to belong to the upper classes are vaguely outlined and lack any intimate sense of reality. One country squire is described but even Rutherford admits that he is a type rather than an individual.

> 'He was like every other squire whom I remember in my native country, and I can remember scores of them. He read no books and tolerated the usual conventional breaches of the moral law, but was an intense worshipper of respectability, and hated a scandal. On one point he differed from his neighbors. He was a Whig and they were all Tories.' 1

This is not Mark Rutherford at his best.

Mrs. Broad and Miss Leroy might be said to belong to the upper middle class. Mrs. Broad never forgot that her father had been Dr. Flavel, an educated, prosperous, Dissenting minister of an important city church. Miss Leroy lived in Bedford when Mark

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter IV

Rutherford was a boy there. She was a beautiful young woman, the daughter of a well-born Frenchman who had been imprisoned near Bedford during the 'great French war'.

> 'She surprised, shocked, and attracted all the sober persons in our circle. Her ways were not their ways. She would walk out by herself on a starry night without a single companion, and cause thereby infinite talk. --- She told a male person once, and told him to his face, that if she loved him and he loved her, and they agreed to sign one another's foreheads with a cross as a ceremony, it would be as good to her as marriage. This may seem a trifle, but nobody now can imagine what was thought of it at the time it was spoken. My mother repeated it every now and then for fifty years.' 1

This evidence of 'barefaced Continental immorality' was not the only cause of disapproval by Miss Leroy's neighbors. She cared nothing about the spotless bed-hangings and the brightly polished brass considered so necessary by every good housekeeper. But this was not her most peculiar dissimilarity.

> 'Mrs. Mobbs, who lived next door to her, averred that she always slept with the window open. Mrs. Mobbs, like everybody else, never opened her window except to "air the room". Mrs. Mobbs' best bedroom was carpeted all over, and contained a great four-post bedstead, hung round with heavy hangings, and protected at the top from draughts by a kind of firmament of white dimity. Mrs. Mobbs stuffed a sack of straw up the chimney of the fireplace, to prevent the fall of the "sutt" as she called it. Mrs. Mobbs, if she had a visitor, gave her a hot supper, and expected her immediately afterwards to go upstairs, draw the window curtains, get into this bed, draw the bed curtains also, and wake up the next morning"bilious".

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter III

> 'This was the proper thing to do. --- Moreover, Miss Leroy was believed by the strongest circumstantial evidence to wash herself all over every morning, a habit which Mrs. Mobbs thought "weakening", and somehow connected with ethical impropriety.' 1

We have already noted that the Hopgoods, because of their advanced ideas about education, were considered 'queer' by their neighbors in Fenmarket. Had they conformed to ordinary patterns, they would have moved with the upper class of Fenmarket because they belonged to the Church and Mr. Hopgood had been manager of the bank. But even Mrs. Martin, the widow of one of the late partners in the bank, dared not be friendly with them.

> 'It would have been a transgression of that infinitely fine and tortuous line whose inexplicable convolutions mark off what is forbidden to a society lady. --- Mrs. Martin was obliged to be very careful. She certainly was on the list at the Lord Lieutenant's, but she was in the outer ring, and she was not asked to those small and select little dinners which were given to Sir Egerton, the Dean of Peterborough, Lord Francis, and his brother, the county member.' 2

The Furzes were prosperous members of the middle class. Mr. Furze was the largest iron-monger in Eastthorpe and did all the foundry-work for miles around. He was firmly fixed in his habits. He always wore a white neckcloth and a frilled shirt, although such fashions were beginning to die out. His life was very regular; breakfast at eight, dinner at one, tea at five and supper at nine. He read no books and never took a holiday out of Eastthorpe. On Sunday mornings he attended a Dissenting Chapel but was

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter III
2 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter VI

not a member and did not attend the week-night prayer-meetings. Although he still continued the custom of morning family worship, he did not pray extempore, contenting himself with reading prayers from 'Family Devotions'.

On Saturdays he took two or three of his farmer customers to the inn for a dinner of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. Afterwards they returned to his home, which was over the shop, for a whisky-and-soda and a smoke.

At five, Mrs. Furze served them tea in the 'drawing room', a room which the family was permitted to use only on Sundays. It was furnished with horsehair sofa and chairs and in the centre was a small round table on which stood a pink vase full of artificial flowers. On the mantel were two more pink vases and two large shells. On the walls were several large pictures. One showed the principal landowner of Eastthorpe, the Honourable Mr. Eaton, in hunting array with his dogs. Another was a mezzotint of the Deluge. In the place of honour over the mantel was a portrait of His Majesty, King George the Fourth, in his coronation robes, and directly opposite, an old and valuable picture of the Virgin Mary.

> 'Mr. Furze had bought it at a sale with some other things, and did not quite like it. It savoured of Popery, which he could not abide; but the parson one day saw it and told Mrs. Furze it was worth something; whereupon she put it in a new maple frame, and had it hung in a place of honour second to that occupied by King George, and so arranged that he and the Virgin were always looking at one another.' [1]

[1] CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter II

Sunday, after Chapel service in the morning, was a quiet, dull day in the Furze household.

> 'It was Mr. Furze's custom on Sunday to go to sleep for an hour between dinner and tea upstairs in what was called the drawing-room, while Mrs. Furze sat and read, or said she read, a religious book. On hot summer afternoons Mr. Furze always took off his coat before he had his nap, and sometimes divested himself of his waistcoat. When the coat and waistcoat were taken off, Mrs. Furze invariably drew down the blinds. She had often remonstrated with her husband for appearing in his shirt-sleeves and objected to the neighbors seeing him in this costume. There was a sofa in the room, but it was horsehair, with high ends both alike, not comfortable, which were covered with curious complications called antimacassars that slipped off directly they were touched, so that anybody who leaned upon them was engaged continually in warfare with them, picking them up from the floor or spreading them out again. There was also an easy chair, but it was not easy, for it matched the sofa in horsehair, and was so ingeniously contrived, that directly a person placed himself in it, it gently shot him forwards. Furthermore, it had special antimacassars, which were a work of art, and Mrs. Furze had warned Mr. Furze off them. "He would ruin them," she said, "if he put his head upon them." So a windsor chair with a high back was always carried by Mr. Furze upstairs after dinner, together with a common kitchen chair, and on these he slumbered. The room was never used, save on Sundays and when Mrs. Furze gave a tea-party. It overlooked the market-place, and, although on a Sunday afternoon the High Street was almost completely silent, Mrs. Furze liked to sit so near the window that she could peep out at the edge of the blind when she was not dozing. It is true no master nor mistress ever stirred at that hour, but every now and then a maidservant could be seen, and she was better than nothing for the purpose of criticism.' 1

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter II

Mrs. Furze had strong social ambitions and wished to change from Chapel to Church and move to the fashionable part of town occupied by Church society. She was opposed by both Catharine and Mr. Furze, but she finally won her point and Mr. Furze built a new home in the Terrace.

Of course all the old furniture was discarded. The new carpet in the drawing-room was patterned with full-blown roses nine inches in diameter, in blue vases. The horsehair furniture was replaced by small, light-weight chairs, much to the disgust of Mr. Furze's farmer customers. The pictures of the Virgin and of George the Fourth were banished upstairs to the spare bedroom and were replaced by fashionable 'oleographs'.

> 'They had very large margins, gilt frames, and professed to represent sunsets, sunrises, and full moons, at Tintern, Como, and other places not named, which Mrs. Furze, in answer to inquiries, always called "the Continent".' 1

Mrs. Furze's efforts to join the little circle of the rector, the lawyer, the banker, and 'two maiden banker ladies', were not very successful..The wives did not call on her except when they wished a donation for the church. On one such occasion, when the parson's wife called, Mr. Furze was discovered in his shirt sleeves, and smoking his clay pipe. After shaking hands with him, Mrs. Colston carefully wiped off her glove.

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter V

In most of the middle class homes, the mistress believed in and rigidly adhered to the old maxim that 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness'. Her whole interest was in her home. She did not read books, did not belong to women's clubs, did not engage in either indoor or outdoor sports. She did, however, sew, as was evident by the numbers of doilies, mats and lace-trimmed hangings in her home. Among the many good housekeepers in the novels we find Mrs. Bellamy and Mrs. Coleman.

Mr. Bellamy was one of Mr. Furze's well-to-do customers and Catharine spent many happy visits at Chapel Farm in the big, old, red brick house. Mrs. Bellamy, uninterested in politics or reading, devoted her mind and energies to 'her home, her dairy, and her fowls'.

> 'She established a series of precautions to prevent dirt, and the precautions themselves became objects to be protected. There was a rough scraper intervening on behalf of the blackleaded scraper; there was a large mat to preserve the mat beyond it; and although a drugget covered the stair carpet, Mrs. Bellamy would have been sorely vexed if she had found a footmark upon it. If a friend was expected she put some straw outside the garden gate, and asked him in gentle tones when he dismounted, if he would kindly "just take the worst off" there. --- Partly, Mrs. Bellamy's excessive neatness was due to a touch of poetry. She polished her verses in beeswax and turpentine, and sought on her floors and tables for that which the poet seeks in Eden and Atlantis.' 1

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter IV

Mrs. Zachariah Coleman was another immaculate housekeeper. One critic has called her 'that physically and morally spotless woman'. 1 She was a prim, tidy little person with very white skin and pale, inexpressive eyes. Her mouth when shut 'seemed too much shut'. She wore white stockings and neat little black sandals fastened with black ribbons. She was a strict Calvinist and read almost nothing, even on week-days.

> 'On Sundays she took up a book in the afternoon, but she carefully prepared herself for the operation as though it were a sacramental service. When the dinner-things were washed up, when the hearth was swept and the kettle on the fire, having put on her best Sunday dress, it was her custom to go to the window - always to the window, never to the fire - where she would open Boston's Fourfold State and hold it up in front of her with both hands. This, however, did not last long, for on the arrival of the milkman, the volume was replaced, and it was necessary to make preparations for tea.' 2

Of course she did not pay for the milk until Monday, for Sabbath observance forbade financial transactions. On one occasion she very much wished some water-cress for a special Sunday tea. Unfortunately the water-cress man demanded his money at once. After some struggle with her conscience she asked the price and was told it would be three-halfpence. She solved the problem by telling the man,

> "Now, mind I give you twopence for yourself - mind I give it you. I do not approve of buying and selling on Sunday. We will settle about the other ha'porth another time." 3

1 ERNEST BAKER, THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL, Volume 9, P. 106
2 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter I
3 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter VI

Even early in the morning her 'front room' was entirely in order; everything was dusted; there was not a speck of ashes in the grate; and she herself appeared in a white apron without a crease or spot.

> 'It was one of Zachariah's weak points, she considered, that he did not seem to care sufficiently for cleanliness, and when he came in he would sometimes put his black hand, before he had washed, on the white tea-cloth, or on the back of a chair, and leave behind him a patch of printer's ink. It was bad enough to be obliged always to wipe the door-handles.' 1

In complete contrast to Mrs. Coleman was Miriam's aunt, Mrs. Dabb. She was the wife of a prosperous provision dealer and when Miriam and her brother, Andrew, went to London to escape the boredom of Cowfold, Andrew worked as a clerk for Mr. Dabb.

Mrs. Dabb's drawing-room, over the shop, was an untidy, stuffy room in which the fat, blowsy mistress reclined on a sofa, glancing occasionally into "Keepsake", "Friendship's Offering" in red silk, or Mrs. Heman's poetry.

> 'She carefully repressed any tendency to unnecessary order, wore a loose dressing-gown all morning, had her breakfast in bed, let her hair stray a little over her face, cultivated a habit of shaking it off and pushing it back with her fingers and generally went as far to be thought a little "wild", as was possible for the wife of a respectable, solid, eminently British, close-fisted Borough tradesman.' 2

She despised her brother, Giacomo, Miriam's father, partly because of his humble occupation as a clockmaker and partly be-

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter II

2 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING, Page 66

cause he liked to 'vegetate' in Cowfold rather than move to the 'metropolis'. But she liked Miriam so long as that liking did not involve any disruption of her own selfish, indolent way of life. Above all else she refused to be considered commonplace and her desire to demonstrate to her brother her strange and superior personality resulted in the following absurd conversation.

> '"Miriam, my dear Giacomo, is a bit of a genius, untamed and irregular, reminding me something of myself."
>
> Giacomo did not much believe in untamed irregular genius. It was certainly of no use in clockmaking.
>
> "Well, what then?"
>
> "I should say that she suffers through limitation of her sphere. No suffering like that, Giacomo. Ah me!"
>
> Mrs. Dabb shook back her hair, and put both her hands to her forehead.
>
> "Does your head ache?"
>
> "No; at least not more than usual. I always have a weight there; I believe it is merely ideas. I asked a very eminent young man who lives not far from us - he occupies a very high position in the hospital - a dresser, I think, they call him; and he said it was due to overstrung - dear me, what was it? I remember putting it down; it seemed so exactly to coincide with my own views."
>
> Mrs. Dabb looked in her pocket book.
>
> "Overstrung cerebration, that was it; overstrung cerebration."' 1

The most interesting young man of the middle classes, other than the young Mark Rutherford of THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, is George Allen. He was the son of a prosperous ironmonger in Cowfold. His schooling, which was typical of a middle class boy of that day,

1 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING, Page 67

terminated when he was fourteen. He was then apprenticed to his father for seven years, and when the story opens, was a young man of twenty-one with excellent prospects.

> 'On week-days he generally wore a waistcoat with sleeves and a black apron. He was never dirty; in fact, he was rather particular as to neatness and cleanliness; but he was always a little dingy and iron-coloured, as retail ironmongers are apt to be. He was now in charge of the business under his father; stood behind the counter; weighed nails; examined locks brought for repair; went to the different houses in Cowfold with a man under him to look at boiler-pipes, the man wearing a cap and George a tall hat. He had a hard, healthy, honest life, was up at six o'clock in the morning, ate well, and slept well.' 1

Like his father, George was an ardent Whig and an enthusiastic Free Trader, which brought him into conflict with some of his farmer customers who were Protectionist. Nevertheless he and his father were energetic in canvassing for the Whig candidates in the elections. Election day was very exciting as the results were published every hour. Fights were common. Apparently 'there was not a single person in the place who was ever drunk before who had not found it necessary to get drunk then in order to support the strain on his nerves.' But later in the evening when the fights became riotous and a general sack of all Tory property began, it was George who courageously dispersed the mob and prevented further destruction.

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XVIII

In the novels are several less prosperous women of the middle and lower classes who support themselves. Some of them kept roomers; others, like Mrs. Caffyn, had small shops.

When Andrew and Miriam arrived in London they found lodgings at Miss Tippet's. Their rooms were dark and small but cheap, too, and looked out on a dingy back street. Miriam was very disappointed and for some reason blamed Miss Tippet. She scorned her landlady as a prim old maid and treated her offers of help with disdain. There was some justification for her feelings as Miss Tippet often considered it her duty to interfere in other people's business and 'set things right'. And she did look prim. She was small, with regular features and very light hair.

> 'It was always drawn very tightly over her forehead, and with extreme precision under her ears. She invariably wore a very tight-fitting black gown, and as her lips, too, were somewhat tightly set, she was a very tight Miss Tippet altogether. It was necessary to be so, for beyond an annuity of £20 a year, she had no means of support saving letting her lodgings. She was very good, but her goodness appeared to lack spontaneity. It seemed as if she did everything, and even bestowed her rare kisses, under instructions from her conscience, and every tendency to effusiveness was checked as a crime. Yet the truth was that she was naturally kind and even generous, but disbelieving in nature on the whole, she never would sanction any natural instinct unless she could give it the form of duty.' 1

Her chief pleasure in life was the church service which she attended each Sunday. She had neither the time nor the patience

1 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING, Page 77

for reading - 'directly she sat down with a volume in her hand it was just as if things went all awry, and compelled her instantly to rise and adjust them'. But in church her cares vanished and she entered into the service with wholehearted enjoyment.

> 'In the corner against the wall, when the music sounded, or when the voice of the priest was heard asking for the Divine mercy, the heart of Miss Tippet often moved, notwithstanding the compression of her tight black dress, and something seemed to rebel in her throat against her bonnet-strings.' 1

As Miriam's and Arthur's fortunes decreased they were forced to take even poorer lodgings. Arthur became very ill and required constant nursing. Much to Miriam's surprise,her landlady, Mrs. Joll, a rude coarse person, offered to share the duty so that Miriam could get some rest at nights. To Mark Rutherford this quality of cheerful unselfishness more than compensated for Mrs. Joll's shortcomings.

> 'A rude, stout, hard person she was, who stood in the shop all day long, winter and summer, amidst the potatoes and firewood, with a woollen shawl round her neck and over her shoulders. A rude, stout, hard person, we say, was Mrs. Joll, fond of her beer, rather grimy, given to quarrel a little with her husband, could use strong language at times, had the defects which might be supposed to arise from constant traffic with the inhabitants of the Borough, and was utterly unintelligent so far as book learning went. Nevertheless she was well read in departments more important perhaps than books in the conduct of human life, and in her there was the one thing needful - the one thing which, if ever there is to be a Judgment Day, will put her on the right

1 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING, Page 78

> 'hand; when all sorts of scientific people, religious people, students of poetry, people with exquisite emotions will go on the left and be damned everlastingly.' 1

Mrs. Caffyn showed this same quality although she was a very different person from Mrs. Joll. She lived in Great Oakhurst, near London and, as a result of events not necessary to outline here, met and befriended the Hopgoods.

She had a large house and used the front part of it as a shop, displaying her wares in the large bay-window. She sold mugs, cups and saucers, butter, washing-blue, cotton materials, treacle, starch, tea, tobacco and snuff, cheese, matches, bacon, writing-paper, string, tin ware and a few drugs, such as black draught, magnesia, pills, sulphur, dill-water and Dalby's Carminative.

> 'A boy was behind the counter. When Mrs. Caffyn was out he always asked the customers who desired any article, the sale of which was in any degree an art, to call again when she returned. He went as far as those things which were put up in packets, such as what were called 'grits' for making gruel, and he was also authorised to venture on pennyworths of liquorice and peppermints; but the sale of half-a-dozen yards of cotton print was as much above him as the negotiation of a treaty of peace would be to a messenger in the Foreign Office.' 2

Mrs. Caffyn did a large business but half her customers owed her money, which she was too kind-hearted to collect. They were farm labourers who were discharged during the winter months but, as Mark Rutherford writes,

1 MIRIAM'S SCHOOLING, Page 107
2 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter XII

> 'as they were not sufficiently philosophic, or sufficiently considerate for their fellows to hang or drown themselves, they were obliged to consume food, and to wear clothes, for which they tried to pay by instalments during spring, summer and autumn'. 1

Mrs. Caffyn belonged to the Anglican Church but, because she was more intelligent and better educated than her neighbors,

> 'she was never subservient to the rector after the fashion of her neighbors; she never curtsied to him, and if he passed and nodded she said, "Marnin', sir," in just the same tone as that in which she said it to the smallest of the Great Oakhurst farmers.' 2

She attended church regularly because she considered it her official duty as the owner of the only shop in the parish. She never entered the Dissenting Chapel, had no heretical ideas in theology, but, even so, she and the rector were not friends. She was a disciple of St. James rather than of St. Paul and believed that 'faith without works is dead'. She had, too, her own ideas of the relative virtues and sins of the parish, which prompted the rector to declare that she was 'little better than a heathen',

> 'The common failings in that part of the country amongst the poor were Saturday-night drunkenness and looseness in the relations between the young men and young women. Mrs. Caffyn's indignation never rose to the correct boiling point against these crimes.' 3

In complete contrast to Mrs. Joll and Mrs. Caffyn was Mrs. Cork, the Hopgoods' landlady in London. She was cold and

1 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter XII
2 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter XII
3 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter XII

hard and her steely blue eyes never reflected the smallest spark of kindness or compassion. Her 'front room', which was rarely used, was cheerless and cold for, though it contained a fireplace, there was no fire, but instead 'a kind of apron of coloured paper' hanging over it. She believed in what she called 'regular habits' and no lodger was ever permitted to transgress her rules.

> 'She had undoubtedly been married, but who Cork could have been was a marvel. Why he died, and why there were never any children were no marvels. At two o'clock her grate was screwed up to the narrowest possible dimensions, and the ashes, potato peelings, tea leaves and cabbage stalks were thrown on the poor struggling coals. No meat, by the way, was ever roasted - it was considered wasteful - everything was baked or boiled. After half-past four not a bit of anything that was not cold was allowed till the next morning and, indeed, from the first of April to the thirty-first of October the fire was raked out the moment tea was over.' 1

Mrs. Cork warred against dirt, not, because like Mrs. Bellamy, she took pleasure in cleanliness and order, but rather because dirt was 'unauthorized' and 'appeared without permission at irregular hours'. She even likedthe dirt 'for she enjoyed the exercise of her ill-temper on it and the pursuit of it to destruction'.

She had one weakness, an enormous tom-cat who slept in a basket in the kitchen.

> 'It was the best-behaved and most moral cat in the parish. At half-past nine every evening it was let out into the backyard and vanished. At ten precisely it was heard to mew and was

1 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter XIII

> 'immediately admitted. Not once in a twelve-month did that cat prolong its love-making after five minutes to ten.' 1

Sunday was the important day of the week in Mark Rutherford's home and was strictly observed by his Independent father and mother. It was not a very happy day. Meals were cold, for every possible preparation for Sunday was made on Saturday. No newspaper or secular book could be read; even letters, unless they seemed of particular importance, were left unopened. Sunday-school was at nine o'clock, immediately followed by the morning service. After dinner came the afternoon period of two or three hours' length, followed in the evening by the trying ordeal of the last long weary service.

In London, too, the day was a dreary one. Mark Rutherford, having deserted the ministry, describes his Sundays in London with his friend, M'Kay. Neither was attached to any particular chapel but sometimes they wandered into a morning service, chiefly as a means of putting in time. He describes one occasion with gentle humour.

> 'Once we came to a chapel where there was a minister supposed to be one of the greatest orators of the day. We had much difficulty in finding standing room. Just as we entered we heard him say, "My friends, I appeal to those of you who are parents. You know that if you say to a child 'go', he goeth, and if you say 'come', he cometh. So the Lord ----" But at this point M'Kay, who had children, nudged me to come out; and out we went.' 2

1 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter XIII
2 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter I

Often they went for walks in Kensington Gardens or strolled towards Hampstead or Highgate.

> 'The skirts of London when the air is filled with north-easterly soot, grit, and filth, are cheerless, and the least cheerful part of the scene is the inability of the vast wandering masses of people to find any way of amusing themselves. At the corner of one of the fields in Kentish town, just about to be devoured, stood a public-house, and opposite the door was generally encamped a man who sold nothing but Brazil nuts. Swarms of people lazily wandered past him, most of them waiting for the public-house to open. Brazil nuts on a cold black Sunday morning are not exhilarating, but the costermonger found many customers who bought his nuts, and ate them, merely because they had nothing better to do.' 1

He speaks again of a dark foggy Sunday afternoon with mobs standing dispiritedly about the doors of 'gin palaces' or wandering aimlessly along the streets. It seemed to be the custom and duty of the decent working-man to take his family for a walk. All were dressed in their unfamiliar best clothes and, while the man pushed the perambulator, the wife followed with the other children.

> 'There are no shops open; the sky over their heads is mud, the earth is mud under their feet, the muddy houses stretch in long rows, black, gaunt, uniform. The little party reach Hyde Park, also wrapped in impenetrable mud-grey. The man's face brightens for a moment as he says, "It is time to go back," and so they return, without the interchange of a word, unless perhaps they happen to see an omnibus horse fall down on the greasy stones. What is there worth thought or speech on such an expedition? Nothing!' 2

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter I
2 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter II

CHAPTER IX POLITICS AND REFORM

Since the days of Cromwell, Dissenters had been Whigs and often violent Radicals, and in his novels Mark Rutherford shows a strong bias against upper-class rule.

When Rutherford came to London his first job was that of a reporter in the House of Commons for two weekly newspapers. Consequently he spent many hours listening to House debates. He found them boring and often meaningless, for only a few members took part in the debates and their arguments were repeated over and over. The majority of the members had little understanding of the discussions and were content merely to cast their votes when directed.

> 'No dock labourer could possibly be more entirely empty of all reasons for action than the noble lords, squires, lawyers, and railway directors whom I have seen troop to the division bell.'
>
> What a mockery controversy was in the House! How often I have seen members, who were furious at one another across the floor, quietly shaking hands outside, and inviting one another to dinner.' 1

Zachariah Coleman, a Dissenter by religion, a printer by trade, and a determined Radical in politics, joined a secret organization known as the "Friends of the People". It was a small club in London, organized and led by Major Maitland, whose object was to rouse public opinion and demand Parliamentary reforms. In 1814, conditions in England were so bad that drastic changes were

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter I

necessary.

> 'Bread was thirteenpence a quartern loaf; the national debt, with a much smaller population, was what it is now; everything was taxed; and wages were very low. But what was most galling was the fact that the misery, the taxes, and the debt had been accumulated, not by the will of the people, but by a corrupt House of Commons, the property of borough-mongers, for the sake of supporting the Bourbons directly, but indirectly and chiefly the House of Hanover and the hated aristocracy. --- The men and women of that time, although there were scarcely any newspapers, were not fools, and there was not a Nottingham weaver who put a morsel of bread in his hungry belly who did not know that two morsels might have gone there if there were no impost on foreign corn to maintain rents, and if there were no interest to pay on money borrowed to keep these sacred kings and lords safe in their palaces and parks.' 1

In the organization the Major and Gaillaud, another leader, were in favor of demonstrations and agitations, but others favored the use of physical force. Zachariah sided with the Major. He was opposed to physical violence; he had always avoided men who used profane language; and he had never in his life entered a tavern. Therefore he was a little shocked to be brought into contact with swearers and drunkards as patriots and reformers. The Major's first aim was education of the people so that they would desire and demand reform. He was certain that open rebellion at this time would be useless, for the middle and even the lower classes would be hostile. His followers strongly disagreed with him.

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter II

> 'It is undoubtedly very bitter to be obliged to believe that the men whom we want to help do not themselves wish to be helped. To work hard for those who will thank us, to head a majority against oppressors, is a brave thing; but far more honour is due to the Maitlands, Caillauds, Colemans, and others of that stamp who strove for thirty years from the outbreak of the French revolution onwards not merely to rend the chains of the prisoners, but had to achieve the more difficult task of convincing them that they would be happier if they were free.' 1

One night the club members narrowly escaped discovery by the police and the leaders were forced to flee from London.

> 'The next morning, however, as soon as it was light, a Secretary of State's warrant, backed by sufficient force, was presented at the lodgings of Caillaud and Zachariah. The birds had flown, and not a soul could tell what had become of them. In Zachariah's street, which was rather a Radical quarter, the official inquiries were not answered politely, and one of the constables received on the top of his head an old pail with slops in it. The minutest investigation failed to discover to whom the pail belonged.' 2

The three friends met again in Manchester and there the club was reorganized. By 1816 conditions in England had become worse and the situation of the working classes was almost intolerable. There were secret outrages, incendiary fires at night, and a sense of insecurity and fear spread through the country.

The little club was now one of many in Manchester whose members were determined upon an expedition to London in which each man would carry a blanket and a petition. Once again the Major, Caillaud, and Zachariah opposed the plan as utter folly but they

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter VIII
2 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter VIII

were outvoted. However, the Major and Caillaud decided to go with the marchers but Zachariah was persuaded to remain in Manchester.

The innocent enthusiasm of the Blanketeers is touching. They believed that they had only to present their petitions to the Prince Regent and he would understand and help them. The whole country would join them and they would return to Manchester in triumph.

How different was the reality! The March of the Blanketeers, several thousand strong, started out from Manchester on March the tenth, 1817. They were dispersed by soldiers and police and only a remnant, less than three hundred, reached Stockport. Twenty continued to Staffordshire but these became discouraged and wandered back to Manchester. The Major was killed by the Yeomanry and Caillaud was imprisoned and later hanged.

Mark Rutherford's sympathies lie entirely with the misguided marchers.

> 'Nothing is more saddening than the spectacle of a huge mass of humanity goaded, writhing, starving, and yet so ignorant that it cannot choose capable leaders, cannot obey them if perchance it gets them, and does not even know how to name its wrongs.' 1

He is bitterly outspoken in his condemnation of George IV.

> 'Respectable Manchester was frightened when the Blanketeers met, and laughed them to scorn when they were dispersed. No wonder at the laughter! What could be more absurd? And yet, when we call

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XI

'to mind the THING then on the throne; the THING that gave £180 for an evening coat, and incurred enormous debts, while his people were perishing; the THING that drank and lied and whored; the THING that never did nor said nor thought anything that was not brutish and contemptible - when we think that the THING was a monarch, Heaven-ordained, so it was said, on which side does the absurdity really lie?' 1

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1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XIII

CHAPTER X THE POOR IN COUNTRY AND CITY

Although Mark Rutherford's poor people might have been described in previous sections on social classes, they deserve a special chapter because they are marked off in the novels from the other groups by special treatment. Here is no veiled irony, no sly fun, but stark, bare, factual descriptions of unrelieved misery and suffering. Sometimes Mark Rutherford's bitterest jibes are directed against the causes of that suffering and often he lashes out against their oppressors with cold fury. The poor unfortunates he treats always with infinite understanding and gentlest compassion.

Consider Phoebe Crowhurst. She was Mrs. Furze's maid but was dismissed at the whim of her mistress and went home to Cross Lanes. Her father was an agricultural labourer, very poor, and conditions in the tiny four-roomed, whitewashed house soon aggravated the dormant infection in Phoebe's lungs. In a few months she lay dying of tuberculosis in the cold, damp cottage.

> 'The living-room faced the north-east, the door opening direct on the little patch of garden, so that in winter, when the wind howled across the level fields, it was scarcely warmer indoors than outside, and rags and dish-clouts had to be laid on the door-sill to prevent the entrance of the snow and rain. At the back was a place, half outhouse, half kitchen, which had once had a brick floor, but the bricks had disappeared. Upstairs, over the living-room, was a bedroom with no fireplace, and a very small casement

> window where the mother and three children slept, the oldest a girl of about fourteen, the second a boy of twelve, and the third a girl of three or four; for the back bedroom over the outhouse had been given up to Phoebe since she was ill. The father slept below on the floor. Phoebe's room also had no fireplace, and great patches of plaster had been brought down by the rain on the south-west side. Just underneath the window was the pigstye. Outside nothing had been done to the house in years. It was not brick built, and here and there the laths and plaster were bare, and the thatch had almost gone. Houses were very scarce on the farms in that part, and landlords would not build.' 1

Mark Rutherford describes with cold venom the attitude of the land-owner's daughter and her friends towards this wretched hovel.

> 'Miss Diana Eaton, eldest daughter of the Honourable Mr. Eaton, had made a little sketch in water-colour of the cottage. It hung in the great drawing-room, and was considered most picturesque.
>
> "Lovely! What a dear old place!" said the guests.
>
> "It makes one quite enamoured of the country," exclaimed Lady Fanshawe, one of the most determined diners-out in Mayfair. "I never look at a scene like that without wishing I could give up London altogether. I am sure I could be content. It would be so charming to get rid of conventionality and be perfectly natural. You really ought to send tha drawing to the Academy, Miss Eaton."' 2

Here is Mark Rutherford's impassioned comment.

> 'That we should take pleasure in pictures of filthy ruined hovels, in which health and even virtue are impossible is a strange sign of the times. It is more than strange; it is an omen and a prophecy that people will go into sham

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter XVIII
2 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter XVIII

> 'ecstasies over one of these pigstyes so long as it is in a gilt frame; that they will give a thousand guineas for its light and shade - light, forsooth! - or for its Prout-like quality, or for its quality of this, that, and the other, while inside the real stye, at the very moment when the auctioneer knocks down the drawing amidst applause, lies the mother dying from dirt fever; the mother of six children starving and sleeping there - starving save for the parish allowance, for the snow is on the ground and the father is out of work.' 1

He never fails to wonder at the dumb passivity of the poor who endured such conditions without complaint as something unchangeable and inevitable.

> 'All this, however, was accepted as the established order of things. It never entered into the heads of the Crowhursts to revolt. They did not revolt against the moon because she was sometimes full and lit everybody comfortably, and at other times was new and compelled the use of rushlights. It was so ordained.' 2

In the Crowhursts was that same quality, heightened and intensified, which was remarkable in Mrs. Joll. They never murmured at the trouble which Phoebe's illness cost them. They were perfect in their tenderness and their self-forgetfulness. Even though life was 'blank, blind, dull as the brown clay in the sodden fields in November' the 'Light' was there.

When she heard that Phoebe was ill, Catharine went at once to see her and offered to sit with her during the night so that the mother might rest.

> 'Catharine's first emotion when she entered was astonishment and indignation. Therein she showed her ignorance and stupidity.

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter XVIII
2 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter XVIII

> 'The owner of the cottage did not force the Crowhursts to live in it. It was not he who directed that a girl dying of consumption should lie close to a damp wall in a room eight feet square with no ventilation. He had the cottage, the Crowhursts, presumably, were glad to get it, and he conferred a favour on them.' 1

Phoebe dies. Her funeral was, of course, on Sunday for the little country chapel was closed and locked during the week.

> 'Nobody could be buried on any other day, because work could not be intermitted; no labourer could stay at home when wife or child was dying; he would have lost his wages, and perhaps his occupation. He thought himself lucky if they died in the night.'
> ----------'She lies at the back of the meeting-house, amongst her kindred, and a little mound was raised over her. Her father borrowed the key of the gate every now and then, and, after his work was over, cut the grass where his child lay, and prevented the weeds from encroaching; but when he died, not long after, his wife had to go into the workhouse, and in one season the sorrel and dandelions took possession, and Phoebe's grave became like all the others - a scarcely distinguishable undulation in the tall, rank herbage.' 2

In this day of accident insurance and unemployment benefits we are apt to forget how precarious was the worker's position a hundred and ten years ago. Mike Catchpole was a widower, with one son, who lived in Eastthorpe and worked for Mr. Furze. One day while working at the shop, he was blinded by a splash of melted iron and was suddenly left helpless. Mr. Furze did nothing for him except to send him 'two bottles of lotion which he had heard were good for the eyes'. It is true that Mike's Club helped him out,

1 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter XVIII
2 CATHARINE FURZE, Chapter XVIII

but their pay only lasted six weeks. So Mike must sit on the street and sell shoe-laces. Later, urged by Catharine, Mr. Furze employed Tom, a lad of seventeen, but only as a 'special case'. He wished it distinctly understood that he was setting no precedent.

Sickness and loss of employment were ever-recurring nightmares of the poor.

> 'The mere discomforts of poverty are bad enough - the hunger and cold of it - but worse than all is the impossibility of being decently ill, or decently dying, or of paying any attention to those who take it into their heads to be ill or to die. A man tolerably well off can at least get his wife some help when she is laid up, and when she is near her end can remain with her to take her last kiss and blessing. Not so the brick-layer's labourer. If his wife is in bed, he must depend upon charity for medicine and attendance. And although he knows he will never see her again, he is forced away to the job on which he is employed; for if he does not go he will lose it, and must apply to the parish for a funeral.' 1

When Mrs. Coleman fell ill, Zachariah could not stay with her but happily Mrs. Carter, a fellow-lodger, was not slow to offer her help, despite the fact that she was the mother of six. Later, as will be seen, she also came to Zachariah's aid.

It will be remembered that Zachariah was involved in the Peterloo riots. He was forced to leave Manchester to escape arrest and went to Liverpool. Here he searched for work with no success. Exhaustion and hunger made him ill and he lay uncared for in his lodging until he sank into delirium.

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XIII

When he awoke he discovered, to his horror, that he was in the work-house. It was a place of utter gloom where sick patients were neglected by callous, brutal, indifferent nurses and by poorly-paid and inefficient doctors. Even their food was stolen from the patients by the so-called nurses. The worst of these are described as

> 'old, degraded, sodden, gin-drinking hags, who had all their lives breathed pauper air and pauper contamination; women with not one single vestige of their Maker's hand left upon them, and incapable, even under the greatest provocation, of any human emotion; who would see a dying mother call upon Christ, or cry for her husband and children, and would swear at her and try to smother her into silence.' 1

Zachariah was rescued by Mrs. Carter who took him to her cousin's home in Liverpool. Even though Zachariah was a stranger, ill, and poor, Mrs. Hocking made him welcome. Her bright little house had flower-pots in the windows and a framed sampler on the sitting-room wall in which 'a very blue Jesus was talking to a very red woman of Samaria on a very yellow well'.

> 'Everything was as neat and clean as it could possibly be; but Mr. and Mrs. Hocking had no children, and had saved a little money.' 2

To Mark Rutherford, the lower classes in London were even worse off than the poor in country and town. Of course, he loved the country and was unhappy in London. His picture of London is sombre and grey like the fog and the dirt which he disliked so much.

1 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XIV
2 THE REVOLUTION IN TANNER'S LANE, Chapter XIV

Clara Hopgood expresses his feelings.

> 'Worse perhaps, than the eternal gloom was the dirt. --- It was impossible to remain clean in Holborn for five minutes; everything she touched was foul with grime; her collar and cuffs were black with it when she went home to her dinner, and it was not like the honest, blowing road-sand of Fenmarket highways, but a loathsome composition of everything disgusting which could be produced by millions of human beings and animals packed together in soot.' 1

Mark Rutherford made one friend in London when he was working as a news correspondent. It was a fellow-reporter, M'Kay. This man had a passionate desire to reform the world.

> 'The spectacle of the misery of London and of the distracted swaying hither and thither of the multitudes who inhabit it, tormented him incessantly. He always chafed at it, and he never seemed sure that he had a right to the enjoyment of the simplest pleasures so long as London was before him.' 2

He decided to engage a room in the slums about Drury Lane which should be open on Sundays to those who wished a quiet, clean place of refuge for a few hours. He did not plan to preach to these persons but to try gradually to bring some light and hope into their lives through the inspiration of the Bible. He hoped in time to gain admittance to their homes and there do some practical good. Mark Rutherford promised to help although he lacked M'Kay's optimistic confidence and enthusiasm. The task seemed hopeless.

1 CLARA HOPGOOD, Chapter XVIII
2 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter II

'The first Sunday I went with him to the room. As we walked over the Drury Lane gratings of the cellars a most foul stench came up, and one in particular I remember to this day. A man half dressed pushed open a broken window beneath us, just as we passed by, and there issued such a blast of corruption, made up of gases bred by filth, air breathed and re-breathed a hundred times, charged with odours of unnameable personal uncleanness and disease, that I staggered to the gutter with a qualm which I could scarcely conquer. At the doors of the houses stood grimy women with their arms folded and their hair disordered. Grimier boys and girls had tied a rope to broken railings, and were swinging on it. The common door to a score of lodgings stood ever open, and the children swarmed up and down the stairs carrying with them patches of mud every time they came in from the street. The wholesome practice which amongst the decent poor marks off at least one day in the week as a day on which there is to be a change; when there is to be some attempt to procure order and cleanliness; a day to be preceded by soap and water, by shaving, and by as many clean clothes as can be procured, was unknown here. There was no break in the uniformity of squalor; nor was it even possible for any single family to emerge amidst such altogether suppressive surroundings. All self-respect, all effort to do anything more than to satisfy somehow the grossest wants, had departed. The shops were open; most of them exhibiting a most miscellaneous collection of goods, such as bacon cut in slices, fire-wood, a few loaves of bread, and sweetmeats in dirty bottles. Fowls, strange to say, black as the flagstones, walked in and out of these shops, or descended into the dark areas. The undertaker had not put up his shutters. He had drawn down a yellow blind, on which was painted a picture of a suburban cemetery. Two funerals, the loftiest effort of his craft, were depicted approaching the gates.' 1

For two years M'Kay and Rutherford continued their efforts. The scheme was a failure - they could not make the slightest impression on Drury Lane.

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter II

> 'Now and then an idler, or sometimes a dozen, lounged in, but what was said was strange to them; they were out of their own world as completely as if they were in another planet, and all our efforts to reach them by simplicity of statement and by talking about things which we supposed would interest them utterly failed. I did not know, till I came in actual contact with them, how far away the classes which lie at the bottom of great cities are from those above them; how completely they are inaccessible to motives which act upon ordinary human beings, and how deeply they are sunk beyond ray of sun or stars, immersed in the selfishness naturally begotten of their incessant struggle for existence and the incessant warfare with society.' 1

Although M'Kay did not convert Drury Lane he did help two or three of its inhabitants. One, Taylor, was a coal porter who worked in Somerset House, carrying coals from the cellars below to the offices above. His wage was sixteen shillings a week which he increased to eighteen by running errands for the clerks.

> 'He did not much resent his poverty. To that I think he would have submitted, and in fact he did submit to it cheerfully. What rankled in him was the brutal disregard of him at the office. He was a servant of servants. The messengers, who themselves were exposed to all the petty tyrannies of the clerks, and dared not reply, were Taylor's masters, and sought a compensation for their own serfdom by making his ten times worse. --- Nobody inquired whether he was married or single; nobody troubled himself when he was ill. If he was away, his pay was stopped; and when he returned to work nobody asked if he was better.' 2

This contempt and indifference drove him almost to madness but always there was one check upon his actions - the fear of dismissal. Thus, no matter what the provocation, he remained silent.

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter V
2 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter V

> 'Once he was ordered to bring some coals for the messenger's lobby. The man who gave him the order, finding that he was a long time bringing them, went to the top of the stairs, and bawled after him with an oath to make haste. The reason of the delay was that Taylor had two loads to bring up - one for somebody else. When he got to the top of the steps, the messenger with another oath took the coals, and saying that he "would teach him to skulk there again", kicked the other coal-scuttle down to the bottom. Taylor himself told me this; and yet, although he would have rejoiced if the man had dropped down dead, and would willingly have shot him, he was dumb. The check operated in an instant. He saw himself without a penny, and in the streets. He went down into the cellar, and raged and wept for an hour.' 1

All these troubles Taylor poured out to M'Kay and Rutherford. They were able to help him by getting him a job as an out-of-doors porter at a large club. Here at least he was in the open air and, to a degree, was free from insolent tyranny.

Another visitor was John, a man of sixty, who worked as a waiter in a public-house and chop-house combined. He was on his feet most of the time and his hours were incredible, from nine in the morning until after midnight. But his work, though hard and degrading, was not his only cross. His wife was a drunkard, and he lived in constant fear that she might, in a drunken rage, harm their ten-year old son. He, too, brought his troubles to M'Kay and Rutherford,. There was nothing they could do for him except to teach him contentment with his lot until death released him. But Providence came to their aid when the wife died, and John, though too old to better himself, could see a faint chance of an improved life for his son.

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter V

The third man whom they helped was young Clark. He had been lame from birth and had found his companionship in books rather than people. He worked in the mailing department of a newspaper office in Fleet Street.

> 'His whole occupation all day long was to write addresses, and for this he received twenty-five shillings a week, his hours being from nine o'clock till seven. The office in which he sat was crowded, and in order to squeeze the staff into the smallest space, rent being dear, a gallery had been run round the wall about four feet from the ceiling. This was provided with desks and gas lamps, and up there Clark sat, artificial light being necessary four days out of five.--- He had got lodgings in Newcastle Street, and to these he returned in the evening, remaining there alone with his little library, and seldom moving out of doors. He was unhealthy constitutionally, and his habits contributed to make him more so. Everything which he saw which was good seemed only to sharpen the contrast between himself and his lot, and his reading was a curse to him rather than a blessing. ---- The monotony of that perpetual address-copying was terrible. He has told me with a kind of shame what an effect it had upon him - that sometimes for days he would feed upon the prospect of the most childish trifle because it would break in some slight degree the uniformity of his toil. For example, he would sometimes change from quill to steel pens and back again, and he found himself looking forward with a kind of joy - merely because of the variation - to the day on which he had fixed to go back to the quill after using steel. He would determine two or three days beforehand, to get up earlier, and to walk to Fleet Street by way of Great Queen Street and Lincoln's Inn Fields, and upon this he would subsist till the day came. He could make no longer excursions because of his lameness.' 1

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter V

M'Kay realized that unless new work were found for Clark he would lose his sanity. The best solution, of course, would have been outdoor work in the country, perhaps as a carpenter or bricklayer, but for Clark this was impossible. M'Kay did find him less monotonous work, however, as a reporter.

Shortly after Mark Rutherford's experiences in Drury Lane he married and found it necessary to seek additional employment to support his wife and step-daughter. He had no special training, except for the ministry, but at last found a clerical job much like Clark's. His hours were from ten in the morning until seven in the evening and, as he lived three miles from the office, he spent few waking hours at home.

> 'I was shut up in a room half below the ground. In this room were three other men besides myself, two of them between fifty and sixty, and one about three or four-and-twenty. All four of us kept books or copied letters from ten to seven, with an interval of three-quarters of an hour for dinner.' 1

A brutal manager increased Rutherford's unhappiness and hatred for this work.

> 'The whole establishment was under the rule of a deputy-manager, who was the terror of the place. He was tall, thin, and suffered occasionally from spitting of blood, brought on no doubt from excitement. He was the strangest mixture of exactitude and passion. He had complete mastery over every detail of the business, and he never blundered. All his work was thorough, down to the very bottom, and he had the most intolerant hatred of everything which was loose and inaccurate. He never passed a day without flaming out into oaths

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter VIII

'and curses against his subordinates, and they could not say in his wildest fury that his ravings were beside the mark. He was wrong in his treatment of men - utterly wrong - but his facts were always correct. I never saw anybody hated as he was, and the hatred against him was the more intense because nobody could convict him of a mistake. He seemed to enjoy a storm, and knew nothing whatever of the constraints which with ordinary men prevent abusive and brutal language to those around them. Some of his clerks suffered greatly from him, and he almost broke down two or three from the constant nervous strain upon them produced by fear of his explosions. For my own part, although I came in for a full share of his temper, I at once made up my mind as soon as I discovered what he was, not to open my lips to him except under compulsion. ---- It was very difficult, but how many times I have blessed myself for adhesion to it. Instead of going home undone with excitement, and trembling with fear of dismissal, I have walked out of my dungeon having had to bite my lips till the blood came, but still conqueror, and with peace of mind.' 1

Fortunately Mark's home life was very happy and he was able to bear the misery of the office by thinking of the happy time at home. But the shadow of illness and unemployment clouded even the happiest hours. Ellen, his wife, fell ill with typhoid fever. Once again the poor come to the aid of the poor. Mrs. Taylor, the coal-porter's wife, took charge of the sick woman because Mark Rutherford had to work. But he spent his nights sitting by his wife's bedside.

'I had tried to obtain release from the office. The answer was that nobody could of course prevent my being away, but that it was not usual for a clerk to be absent merely because his wife was not well. The brute added with a sneer that

1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter VIII

> 'a wife was "a luxury" which he should have thought I could hardly afford.' 1

Six weeks of careful nursing saved Ellen's life. In the autumn, when she had fully recovered, Mark decided to celebrate by taking his little family for a day's holiday in the country. Their happy excursion on the following Sunday ends with this passage:

> 'The season of the year, which is usually supposed to make men pensive, had no such effect on us. Everything in the future, even the winter in London, was painted by Hope, and the death of the summer brought no sadness. Rather did summer dying in such fashion fill our hearts with repose, and even more than repose- with actual joy.' 2

With these words the story of Mark Rutherford abruptly ends. Reuben Shapcott, the editor, adds this explanation:

> 'Here ends the autobiography. A month after this last holiday my friend was dead and buried. He had unsuspected disease of the heart, and one day his master, of whom we have heard something, was more than usually violent. Mark, as his custom was, was silent, but evidently greatly excited. His tyrant left the room; and in a few minutes afterwards Mark was seen to turn white and fall forward in his chair. It was all over! His body was taken to a hospital and thence sent home. The next morning his salary up to the day of his death came in an envelope to his widow, without a single word from his employers save a request for acknowledgment. Towards midday, his office coat, and a book found in his drawer, arrived in a brown paper parcel, carriage unpaid.' 3

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1 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter IX
2 MARK RUTHERFORD'S DELIVERANCE, Chapter IX
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CHAPTER XI CONCLUSION

Much more could be written of Mark Rutherford - as a literary critic, a translator of philosophical works, a political journalist and as a novelist. But the aim of this essay has been to show, by illustration from his six novels, a small section of English people during a definite period in English history. The group of people are English Dissenters and the period is the early half of the nineteenth century. Within these limits Mark Rutherford is the best, if not the only, social historian. Therefore, not only are his books interesting from a literary point of view, but to the student of history they present the only true and discriminating picture of a social type which has now vanished. As studies of Nonconformist England they deserve a high and solitary place in Victorian literature.

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